

CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION GUIDELINES

Purpose of Statement

The congregation of First Congregational United Church of Christ, Menomonie, aspires to be a God-centered fellowship. Here, all can seek a closer relationship with God in a trusting, nurturing place. As part of this mission, one of our goals is to provide a safe environment for the children and youth who are entrusted to our care, as they participate in our programs and use our facilities. We want our congregation to be a haven free of sexual misconduct or harassment and of any child abuse.

To help reach these goals, we have adopted the statement and guidelines, along with procedures and educational programs, to reduce the possibility of child sexual or physical abuse, or any type of sexual misconduct or harassment from occurring in our congregation. While guidelines cannot anticipate and prevent all misfortune, they can state a purpose and provide guidance to achieve the purpose. These guidelines express our keen interest in protecting our children and youth, while maintaining the trusting atmosphere of our congregation for the entire congregation, adults and children alike.

Safe Ministries Policy Statement (approved by church council on Sept. 12, 2006)

Members, employees and other participants in the life of First Congregational United Church of Christ, in doing the work of God, shall at all times strive to uphold the tenets of the congregation's mission statement:

We are called together:

- *To celebrate God's presence;*
- *To create a welcoming and supportive community of all God's people;*
- *To help each person to grow in his and her relationship with God; affirming the diversity of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, social and economic status, and the differently abled;*
- *To observe and share life's passages and our faith traditions;*
- *To reach out in love, seeking justice and peace;*
- *And to tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.*

In order to do this we will work to ensure that all persons, male or female, adult or child, can engage in the life of the church safely and free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, abuse, exploitation, or intimidation.

As a loving and engaged community of Christians, we will come to the aid of those in need of protection, and more importantly, we will strive to prevent potentially harmful situations from occurring in the first place.

Section One: Adult Screening Procedures

Volunteers who have taken an active part in the life of the congregation may be invited to become involved with the Educational and Youth Programs at various levels of commitment. Adults interested in volunteering time with our church's children or youth in an ongoing or short-term capacity may receive training and must comply with a screening process to ensure adequate information is known about the adult to confidently engage them in church programs. Staff and volunteer applicants may be refused, based on the information provided in the screening process.

The Minister of Christian Education and Formation (MCEF) is responsible for the screening process for these volunteer positions. The personnel committee is responsible for screening staffed positions.

- Adults will complete the primary or secondary screening process, as appropriate.
- Any person known to have committed previous acts of sexual misconduct with children or youth shall be strictly prohibited from serving our children or youth; new employees and volunteers having satisfied the Primary Screening Process (see below) may assume their positions immediately.
- All persons will participate in initial and annual Safe Ministries Training.

There are two levels of screening: primary and secondary.

1. Primary Screening Process

This process is for all paid staff and volunteers who have regular or intensive contact with children and youth, including but not limited to pastor, MCEF, choir directors, nursery staff, Kids' Club coordinator and volunteers, Sunday school leaders, youth group leaders, intergenerational visiting volunteers, confirmation mentors, trip chaperones, lock-in volunteers.

The applicant will complete the following steps in the primary screening:

- Completing the Volunteer or Employment Application Form.
- Reviewing the Code of Behavior.

The Minister of Christian Education and Formation will do the following:

- Conduct or authorize a personal interview if clarification is needed or deemed advisable.
- Conduct criminal background check and review references.

Once all the information is compiled, the Minister of Christian Education and Formation, in consultation with the participating committee, will confirm the applicant's suitability to serve.

2. Secondary Screening Process

This process is for occasional and event volunteers, including but not limited to nursery volunteers, occasional Sunday school volunteers, drivers, etc.

Applicants who will have limited contact with children or youth over the course of a year are asked to do the following:

- Complete a Secondary Screening Application.
- Review the Code of Behavior and sign its acknowledgement form.

Section Two: Education and Training

The Church Council will adopt and implement education and training programs related to the Child and Youth Protection Guidelines for volunteers, staff, and congregation. The MCEF or designee, authorized by the Church Council, will be responsible for the implementation of education and training programs.

Part 1: New Employee and Volunteer Orientation

As part of new employee and volunteer orientation, each person will review the Child and Youth Protection Guidelines and the Code of Behavior.

Part 2: Annual training

Primary volunteers and staff will be required to participate in an annual review of these guidelines, including how and when to report a possible misconduct incident or questionable behavior to designated authorities (Pastor, MCEF, Advocacy Panel).

Section Three: Maintenance of Records

Records of all actions required by this policy and any material pertinent to it, including application, acknowledgment forms, criminal records check reports, attendance sheets, incident reports, and other reports, shall be kept in a secure and confidential place in the church.

Periodic Criminal Records Check may be conducted for ongoing volunteers and staff to maintain accurate and updated records.

Access to these records will be restricted on a need-to-know basis to the MCEF, Pastor, and Advisory Panel. It is expected that all records related to volunteers and employees will be confidential in nature.

Section Four: Advocacy Panel

An Advocacy Panel exists for three purposes:

1. In the event that a volunteer, congregation member or staff member is uncomfortable reporting an allegation of misconduct to the ministers of the church, that person may take the allegation or concern to the Advocacy Panel.
2. The Panel advises staff members involved in screening part-time staff and volunteers.
3. The panel also implements the Response Plan in the event of a reported concern.

The Panel is composed of two to three people, including at least one male and one female, who are appointed by the council for indefinite terms. Panel members will be noted on documents related to this policy and changes will be announced promptly in congregation publications. All members of this panel shall maintain a strict code of confidentiality.

Section Five: Response Plan

Reports of questionable behavior or suspicions of misconduct should be made to one of the following entities: Pastor, MCEF, member of the Advocacy Panel.

Those who receive a report will contact at least one of the others involved on the Panel or team (includes Pastor and MCEF) to discuss the information and determine need for further action as outlined in the Procedures for Handling Complaints of Code Violations.

Section Six: Council Duties

The council will ensure the following are reviewed annually for appropriateness and to make any needed modifications:

- Code of Behavior
- Application process
- Response plan

Appendix A: Screening Documentation

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION Primary Screening Application

This application should be completed by all who seek any position that will involve the frequent supervision or custody of children or youth. An additional application may be added to address specific information needed for selection for a paid position.

Name: _____
Last First Middle

If you've been known by another name, please note it here: _____

Date of birth: _____
Note: This information is required to conduct a Criminal Records Background Check

Present address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP _____

Home phone: _____

Position applied for: _____

Date you are available to start: _____

First aid training? ☐ No ☐ Yes Date completed _____

CPR training? ☐ No ☐ Yes Date completed _____

Employment

Current Employer & Phone: _____

Primary Job Activity/Occupation: _____

Volunteer Experience

Please list any relevant volunteer positions you have held and list the duties performed in each position, name of your supervisor, address and phone number of the volunteer organization, and dates of your volunteer service.

Previous volunteer experience— Name of organization & address	Volunteer position	Duties & responsibilities	Supervisor name	Dates of volunteer service

Have you ever been charged with, convicted of, or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, sexual misconduct, child abuse, or other crimes of violence, theft or motor vehicle violations)? ☐ No ☐ Yes

If yes, please explain: _____

Note: Answering "Yes" to this question does not automatically deny your opportunity to volunteer.

References

Please list three individuals who are not related to you by blood or marriage as references. Please list people who have known you for at least three years.

1. Name: _____
Address: _____
Daytime phone: _____
Evening phone: _____
Length of time you have known reference: _____
Relationship to reference: _____
2. Name: _____
Address: _____
Daytime phone: _____
Evening phone: _____
Length of time you have known reference: _____
Relationship to reference: _____
3. Name: _____
Address: _____
Daytime phone: _____
Evening phone: _____
Length of time you have known reference: _____
Relationship to reference: _____

Waiver and consent

I, _____, hereby certify that the information I have provided on this application for a volunteer position is true and correct. I authorize this church to verify the information I have provided on this application by contacting the references and employers I have listed, by conducting a criminal records check, or by other means, including contacting others whom I have not listed. I authorize the references and employers listed in this application to give whatever information they may have regarding my character and fitness for the position for which I have applied. This information will be kept confidential unless release is required by legal process or for the defense of this church. In the event that my application is accepted, I agree to abide by and be bound by the policies of First Congregational United Church of Christ, Menomonie, Wisconsin, and to refrain from inappropriate conduct in the performance of my duties on behalf of the church.

I have read this waiver and the entire application, and I am fully aware of its contents. I sign this consent freely and under no duress or coercion.

<u>Signature of Applicant:</u> _____	<u>Date:</u> _____
<u>Signature of Witness:</u> _____	<u>Date:</u> _____

SECONDARY SCREENING APPLICATION

(This application is for occasional event volunteers, including but not limited to nursery volunteers, occasional Sunday school volunteers, drivers, etc.)

Signature (Parent or guardian, if volunteer is under 18 years of age)	Print name of counselor/volunteer
Print maiden name, if applicable	Date of birth (Required for records check)
Address	Phone
Name of event / type of activity	Beginning and ending dates of event

I have read and agree to be bound by the Code of Behavior of the First Congregational United Church of Christ, Menomonie. I shall refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church. I covenant as follows:

- To honor each child's integrity and worth as a child of God.
- To provide a nurturing and safe environment for children and youth to grow socially and spiritually.
- To continue to grow and nurture my own personal faith.
- To work in partnership with the professional staff, volunteers, and Christ as a part of the larger Christian community.

Please complete

Have you ever been charged with, convicted of, or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, sexual misconduct, child abuse, or other crimes of violence, theft or motor vehicle violations)? ☐ No ☐ Yes

If yes, please explain: _____

Note: Answering "Yes" to this question does not automatically deny you employment.

Signature	Today's date
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FOR OFFICE USE

☐ Records check Y / N If yes, date: _____

Signed Code of Conduct received on: _____

FORM FOR REFERENCE CHECK

Applicant name: _____

Reference name: _____

Reference address: _____

Reference phone: _____

1. What is your relationship to the applicant?

2. How long have you known the applicant?

3. How well do you know the applicant?

4. How would you describe the applicant?

5. How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to children or youth?

6. How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to adults?

7. How would you describe the applicant's leadership abilities?

8. How would you feel about having the applicant as a volunteer worker with your child or youth?

9. Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect the applicant's ability to work with children and/or youth? If so, please describe.

10. Do you have any knowledge that the applicant has ever been convicted of a crime? If so, please describe.

11. Please make any other comments you feel appropriate.

Reference inquiry completed by: _____

Signature/ Date: _____

Appendix B: Training Documentation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY AND CODE OF BEHAVIOR

I have read and agree to be bound by the Child and Youth Protection Guidelines and Code of Behavior of the First Congregational United Church of Christ, Menomonie. I shall refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church. I covenant as follows:

- To honor each child's integrity and worth as a child of God.
- To provide a nurturing and safe environment for children and youth to grow socially and spiritually.
- To continue to grow and nurture my own personal faith.
- To work in partnership with the professional staff, volunteers, and Christ as a part of the larger Christian community.

Print Name

Date

Signature

Appendix C: PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS OF CODE VIOLATIONS

Several approaches may be taken by the Advocacy Panel or ministers in addressing complaints:

1. A minister or member of the Advocacy Panel can address violations informally, as long as there is no suspected abuse or harassment of a minor. This may include clarifying and reviewing the guidelines and Code of Behavior with the person in question.
2. If an informal resolution of the complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed, the Advocacy Panel will institute formal proceedings which can include the following steps:
 - A representative of the Advocacy Panel gathers statements or other information from the individuals involved in the alleged exploitation or harassment and from others who may have pertinent information, such as qualified professional consultants, and present such information to the Advocacy Panel.
 - The Advocacy Panel makes determinations and forwards its findings to the appropriate committee, governing body or agency.
3. **If the complaint includes an allegation of abuse or harassment of a minor, the Advocacy Panel will contact the appropriate legal and church authorities.**

The Advocacy Panel shall advise the Minister and Moderator of the receipt of all complaints and shall keep them apprised of ongoing steps and actions taken. If either the Minister or Moderator is the subject of the complaint, this notice requirement shall not apply to that person. A written summary of the Advocacy Panel proceedings will be maintained. Confidentiality of all parties will be respected throughout the process.

The person(s) toward whom the inappropriate behavior is directed need not be the complainant. Moreover, neither consent nor acquiescence will excuse or exonerate inappropriate behavior. The church may initiate or proceed with the formal complaint process at any time.

Any person bringing an abuse, sexual harassment or exploitation complaint or assisting in investigating such a complaint will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment or church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.

NB: In the event of a complaint of code violation, the following information will be kept at minimum in a confidential location by church staff:

Nature of Complaint:

Date of Complaint:

Resolution of Complaint

Appendix D: CODE OF BEHAVIOR

The following rules serve as a guide for conduct for all staff and volunteers working with children and youth.

1. General Behavior for Leaders

Adult leaders for a youth ministry activity function as representatives of the church and as such are held to different standards than when acting as a parent or adult in their own family. The rules and guidelines of the church must be followed by all leaders at all events, thereby providing appropriate supervision for youth. Illegalities and irresponsibility cannot be allowed. Supervision must be consistent, reasonable and prudent.

Adults are encouraged to remember that they will be providing both supervision and modeling of adult Christian behavior for the youth in their care and should endeavor to see that the example they set is consistent with the values and expectations of the community.

2. The Two-Adult Rule

The children and youth involved in church programs and services shall be under the care and supervision of two adults; one may be a high school aide for nursery or elementary age children. If an exception must be made, there must be frequent observation by a person with responsibility for Christian Education or a designee.

No teacher, advisor, aide or anyone else working with our children or youth should place themselves in a compromising situation by being alone with a child out-of-sight of other teachers, advisors, aides, or parents. Any exception should be rare and made only with written consent of a parent of the child or youth.

The following minimal levels of adult supervision will be followed for programs in our church. These guidelines are informed by the Insurance Boards of the United Church of Christ and American Camping Association.

AGE GROUP	ADULT/YOUTH
0-4 years old	2 adult for 1 -10 youth
5-8 years old	2 adults for 1-12 youth
9-14 years old	2 adults for1-16 youth
15-18 years old	2 adults for1-20 youth

3. Five-Year Separation Rule

When utilizing high school and young adults in the educational department, youth programs and off-site activities, every effort will be made to ensure a five-year separation between these young persons and those they supervise. Every attempt will be made first to use youth who have reached the age of 18 as workers with children or youth.

4. Bathroom Supervision of Educational Department Children

Normally teachers, advisors, or aides who accompany a child to the bathroom should remain outside the bathroom while the child is inside. If a child needs diapering or assistance with zipping, buttoning, clean-up, wiping, etc., the person providing assistance will make a notation on the Attendance Sheet and advise the parent that assistance was given. If anything unusual occurred during this assistance, a note describing the help given and persons present should be written and

handed to the department supervisor at the close of educational program day. Diapering of infants and toddlers may be done in the classroom when two screened volunteers are present.

5. Parental Consent

Parents are asked to provide a signed permission form for all church-sponsored activities in which their children are involved.

6. Drugs, Tobacco, Alcohol

The use of any illicit drugs, tobacco or alcoholic products is not permitted before, during, or immediately following a church-sponsored youth event.

7. Discipline

The purpose of discipline with children and youth is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of responsibility, respect and cooperation. No child shall be disciplined by the use of spanking, hitting, slapping, or any form of physical punishment. Verbal reprimands shall not include destructive criticism, insults or shouting. Teachers, advisors and aides and others helping in the classroom are encouraged to listen to the child, communicate expectations or appropriate behavior, use time-outs or give alternate choices. If a child is disruptive, a teacher or aid from the class or a neighboring class may be sent to locate the Minister of Christian Education and Formation or the child's parent.

8. Overnight Rule

Any and all adult chaperones supervising overnight stays at our facilities or on congregational sponsored trips shall have been cleared to do so using the Primary Screening Process.

For lock-ins/outs, at least one adult male and one adult female will supervise, assuming both girls and boys are present. When two adults supervise, if they are domestic partners, a third adult advisor is to be present.

When an activity/trip involves overnights, there shall be at least two adult chaperones of each sex in the youth sleeping quarters if both sexes of youth are present. If the event involves meeting with other groups where additional chaperones will be present, the rule may be satisfied cooperatively with those groups given that those volunteers are also screened by the local church.

9. Physical Contact

Physical contact such as wrestling, horseplay, sardines or other high contact games is not appropriate recreational activity. No adult leader, staff or volunteer should initiate or encourage physical or intimate contact with children or youth. Such spontaneous activities among children or youth should be minimal and short-lived. Setting boundaries is the responsibility of the adults. All participants are expected to remain with the group throughout the times listed in congregation publications.

10. Youth Members of Boards and Committees

No youth member of Church Council, committee, subcommittee, or task force shall be in attendance at a meeting with fewer than two adult members present without the youth's parent.

11. Leaving at the End of an Event

We attempt to avoid situations where one adult and one youth or child are left at the facility's door waiting to be picked up by parents at the end of an evening activity. Parents are encouraged to respect concluding times.

When children are finished with classes or activities on Sunday morning and waiting for parents:

- Children 0-5 years of age using our Nursery will use a sign-in procedure and be released to the adult who brought them.
- Children in preschool Sunday school will be supervised in their classrooms by the teachers until picked up by a responsible person. On special occasions or holidays, another room may be specified for pick up.
- Older children who need assistance will be escorted to the Fellowship Hall to find their parents.

12. Transportation

Staff and adult leaders or teachers cannot transport children or youth between congregation facility and home. Transportation for field trips, activities, or events is by groups and will originate and end from the congregation facility, except with parental permission.

Staff, teachers, advisors or aides who provide transportation will:

- Avoid being alone in the car with a child.
- Hold a valid driver's license.
- Have no more than two moving violations in the past three years.
- Use a vehicle in good mechanical condition.
- Carry no more riders than can be secured in seat belts or appropriate restraints.
- Will comply with current laws regarding automobile safety for children.
- Provide an insurance card as proof of insurance.

13. Parental Guidelines

We strongly encourage parents, when on the premises with their children, to know at all times where their children are, who they are with, and what they are doing. It is strongly encouraged that children 10 or younger do not play in unsupervised areas.

14. Visitors On-site

Staff or volunteers serving our congregation are asked to be aware of who is visiting our facilities. Visitors are welcomed and will be accompanied on their visit to areas frequented by our youth and children by a member of our staff or a designee.

15. Recognizing and Reporting Violations

If You Suspect a Violation of the Code

If a suspected case of abuse or a violation of these guidelines has been reported to you or is suspected by you to have occurred at a congregational-related function or program, immediately contact the Pastor, Minister of Christian Education and Formation or any member of the Advocacy Panel. If the alleged abuser is a minister, report the allegation to a member of the Advocacy Panel and the Northwest Association Minister at (608)846-7880.

Abuse can include emotional physical or sexual abuse.

Emotional Abuse Can Include

- Verbal, destructive criticism
- Making demeaning or insulting statements
- Shouting

Physical Abuse Can Include

- Spanking
- Hitting
- Slapping
- Any form of physical punishment

Sexual Abuse Can Include

- Sexual remarks
- Inappropriate kissing
- Fondling
- Touching parts of the body which would be covered
- Watching any sexual activity
- Intercourse
- Showing pornography

Even if you are unsure whether or not your suspected case falls under these definitions, it is strongly recommended that you report your suspicion immediately.